

London & A  
Dec 1, 1997

**REMEMBER JERUSALEM**  
**Psalm 137:1,3-6**

Let me begin with a poem, one of the oldest poems in the world.

[By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down, and wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung our lyres. Our captors ...[said], 'Sing us a song of Zion'... How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember thee."

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem." It's a song of the refugees, a song of the marginalized, and it was written at least 2,500 years ago, Psalm 137. But what does Jerusalem have to do with Asia? That's what I am supposed to be talking about. Aside from the fact that Jerusalem is in Asia, which some people forget, I think of the connection in another way. I think of the symbol, Jerusalem. However far we may roam, however long we live, we all have our Jerusalems. Our Jerusalems are those almost sacred places in our memories, the roots of our identities. They are what we always remember as "home".

I have three Jerusalems, three [4] cities I will always remember. One is Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. One is Seoul, the capital of South Korea. And one is Peking (Beijing), the capital of China. [And one is Princeton] Those are my three [4] homes, my Jerusalems. I have lived in them longer or more intensely than anywhere else, about 18 years in Pyongyang, some twenty-five years in Seoul, and two intense years I will never forget in Peking in the middle of a revolution. [And now 17 years in Princeton.] My three [4] Jerusalems.

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my hand wither, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember thee."

I. PYENGYANG. I left my first Jerusalem, Pyengyang, <sup>was</sup> 62 years ago, and thought I might never see it again. Then suddenly, in January 1997, there was an unexpected opening, and I found myself going home. But Pyengyang was not the Jerusalem I remembered. By an amazing coincidence our Russian plane landed us at the Pyengyang airport on January 25, my father's birthday, exactly 107 years to the day since he first landed in Korea. He was just 26 years old, and within a year, young and unafraid, he determined to go north, into territory forbidden for residence by foreigners, to try to open the forbidden north to missionary work. Pyenyang in 1890 was no Jerusalem. It was known as the roughest, wickedest city in Korea. A city of tiger hunters, unruly mobs, and child prostitutes. On his second trip they stoned him in the street. And the next year, 1892, they drove him out of the city six times in just that one year.

But I didn't remember Pyengyang as the wickedest city in Korea. By the time I <sup>was born</sup> ~~came alone~~ <sup>of</sup> father was 50 years old when I was born--Pyengyang was <sup>known</sup> as the city of churches. Father organized the first one with his first eight baptisms in 1894. There were thirty when I was born there. There were so many Christians in the city that shopkeepers found it useless to open for business on Sunday--that was the day that Korean Christians didn't buy things. They went to church. People in the country began to call it "Yerushalem", because they thought a Christian city should be called by the name of the mother of Christian cities, Jerusalem. The wicked city had become a Korean

Jerusalem.

But Pyongyang was once again not Jerusalem when I finally returned in January, 1997. True, they didn't stone us when we arrived, as they had stoned my father. They did, however, take away our passports, which left us feeling very vulnerable. But that was temporary. In fact they treated us very well.

They drove us from the airport in a cavalcade of six cranberry-red Mercedes. I hardly recognized the city. It wasn't the friendly, small beautiful Asiatic city I had known. It didn't even look or feel Asiatic. Asian cities are always so full of life--people buying, selling, talking, bargaining, pushing, laughing. But as we moved through the broad, clean streets, we saw so few people. The streets seemed almost empty, and unnaturally silent. And where were the churches, I remembered. There were none, at least not at first sight. Instead of the crosses on buildings all over the cities in the south--we counted thirteen churches visible from just one window in our brief stop at the Seoul airport, here it was the communist slogans which were plastered all over the buildings, and hung across the streets--big black or gold letters on red signs at every corner, on the heavy, not very beautiful buildings. The constant repetition of communist slogans was depressing. "What the party says; we do". And "Our great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung will always be with us, eternally". He died three years ago. But they are making him into a god. Eileen remarked that the whole city had the feeling of a religious cult, turned in on itself, closely guarded, and manipulated with religious intensity.

Pyongyang's religion is politics. Not the God of Jerusalem,

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. They have turned cultic, and their gods are new and very political.

Churches?. Fifty or so years ago there were more Christians in northern Korea than in southern Korea. Two-thirds of all the Christians were in the north. Not now. In all of North Korea there are only three open churches--two Protestant, one Catholic. They were built by the communist state for public relations reasons. They were built to prove to the outside world that there is religious liberty in North Korea. On Sunday we went to worship at one of them. There were about 30 or 40 people gathered, and even to see that many Christians together was an encouragement. For the last six or seven years the government has allowed public Christian worship once again in the capital. But they were all old people. No young people. It is forbidden to expose anyone under 17 to Christian teachings. They are not allowed to have public baptisms, or weddings in their three permitted churches.

We had been told that they have a seminary for training Christian ministers, but were disappointed to find that it was not functioning this year. When the persecutions stopped, and the three churches were built for them, they opened a class for about eight ministerial candidates, one class only for a four year course. They had intended to begin another class then, but there were not enough churches for even that few a number of trained leaders, so they had suspended the teaching for a while. One new development we did discover, and were delighted. A new category of Christian gatherings has been recognized. There have been only two since Christianity was once again allowed: there were the three open churches, and the

unregistered, unrecognized house churches--perhaps as many as 500, they told us. But now some of the house churches have been permitted to become semi-public, and are called "meeting places". The total number, we were told, is 3 open churches (2 Protestant, 1 Catholic--they cannot call it "Roman Catholic", for they are not allowed to recognize the authority of the Pope), and 10 meeting places (7 Protestant, 3 Catholic), and an estimate of 500 house churches. churches.

In so many ways, that visit to my first Jerusalem, Pyengyang, was a disappointment. But how can I forget it. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem..." How can I forget the teacher who told me in a low voice, "I am a Christian". And the little choir, 5 women and a man, singing the old Christian hymns with tears in their eyes. They need our prayers.

And they need food. We saw no signs of starvation in Pyengyang. They keep the city as a showcase, and visitors like us see only what they want us to see. But they say that by May, or August at the latest, North Korea will run out of its last stores of food. Just this month USA Today (Apr. 11, 1997) carried a harrowing article about the suffering. From one orphanage came this report: "This winter 30 babies have died from lack of food and from contaminated water." And from a hospital on the Yalu River, "We can give our patients less than a third of the 1,500 calories they need a day to stay alive." And from another city, "Factories have been shut for lack of electricity; the nurseries and kindergartens can no longer serve meals; about half of the 8,800 children under 7 have stopped growing or lack of food. Looking at them, you can see that soon they will die--they lie there extremely

quite and look like skeletons". In the villages, women and children scour the empty fields for the "one meal a day--a bowl of gruel with chopped weeds, pulverized corn cobs, ground roots or the boiled inner skin of bark" off what trees have not been cut down to keep them warm in the Siberian-cold winter.

They do indeed need our help. Paul told his first converts in Europe, the Macedonians to "Remember Jerusalem", and from their poverty they took up an offering for the mother church in Jerusalem in its hour of need. I can't forget the Christians of North Korea in my Jerusalem. The best way Eileen and I have found to help is through the Eugene Bell Foundation...

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem..."

II. SEOUL. But what about my second Jerusalem, Seoul?. What a difference!. North Korea is collapsing into bankruptcy. South Korea is one of the economic miracles of Asia. When I was a boy, it was the north which was the busy industrial center of the country; the south was rural agrarian. The north had the factories, the coal, the water power, the electricity. Today the north is rusting away, and South Korea is one of the "little tigers" of Asia's economic boom. South Korea has the 11th largest economy in the world; and is the 6th largest trade exporter in proportion to its productivity. 25 years ago per capita income in South Korea was \$80 a year; today it is over \$10,000 a year per person.

And churches? Well, in numbers of churches it is Seoul, not Pyenyang, which we might call "Yerushalem". There are three open churches in North Korea; in South Korea 50,000. There may be about

quite and look like skeletons". In the villages, women and children scour the empty fields for the "one meal a day--a bowl of gruel with chopped weeds, pulverized corn cobs, ground roots or the boiled inner skin of bark" off what trees have not been cut down to keep them warm in the Siberian-cold winter.

They do indeed need our help. Paul told his first converts in Europe, the Macedonians to "Remember Jerusalem", and from their poverty they took up an offering for the mother church in Jerusalem in its hour of need. I can't forget the Christians of North Korea in my Jerusalem. The best way Eileen and I have found to help is through the Eugene Bell Foundation...

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem..."

II. SEOUL. But what about my second Jerusalem, Seoul?. What a difference!. North Korea is collapsing into bankruptcy. South Korea is one of the economic miracles of Asia. When I was a boy, it was the north which was the busy industrial center of the country; the south was rural agrarian. The north had the factories, the coal, the water power, the electricity. Today the north is rusting away, and South Korea is one of the "little tigers" of Asia's economic boom. South Korea has the 11th largest economy in the world; and is the 6th largest trade exporter in proportion to its productivity. 25 years ago per capita income in South Korea was \$80 a year; today it is over \$10,000 a year per person.

And churches? Well, in numbers of churches it is Seoul, not Pyenyang, which we might call "Yerushalem". There are three open churches in North Korea; in South Korea 50,000. There may be about

5,000 Christians in the north, counting the unregistered underground house churches; in South Korea 18,000,000.

<u>Here is another comparison:</u>	<u>N. Korea</u>	<u>S. Korea</u>
Population	24 million	45.5 million
Infant mortality (per 1000)	26	8
Annual G D	21.5 billion	590 million
Christians	5,000	18 million
Size in sq. miles	47,000	38,000

Presbyterians began in Switzerland with John Calvin. But the largest Presbyterian church in the world is not in Switzerland but in Seoul, Korea. Methodism began in England with John Wesley, but the two largest Methodist churches in the world are in Seoul, Korea. Pentecostalism, in its modern form, began in Southern California, but the largest Pentecostal church in the world is in Seoul, Korea.

Now you might think that with the South so rich and prospering, that this is one Jerusalem that needs no offering. That we can forget it. Not so. As a matter of fact, it is the poor who proportionately support the Christian churches far more generously than the rich. Evangelism in South Korea is leveling off. The church is not growing as it should. And many a small Christian church is struggling to survive; many a Christian school is in financial trouble; many a Christian family is not sharing in the general spread of wealth.

Don't forget South Korea. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem".

III. PEKING, CHINA. Now, my third Jerusalem, Peking (or Beijing). It wasn't always my Jerusalem, my fondly remembered home. There was a time when, in the Chinese revolution, I couldn't wait to get away from China altogether. I was there for only about four years, two years in Peking at Yenching University, and two years in Nanking at



Nanking Theological Seminary (about one year under the nationalists and nearly three years under the communists, 1947-1951).

On our way into North Korea we had to go by way of Peking. Seoul to Pyengyang, only about 100 miles apart would have been much quicker, but the Korean border at the 38th parallel is the tightest, most impermeable border, I think, in the world. A 5-mile demilitarized zone, barbed wire, tank traps, and two of the largest armies in the world facing each other, a million in the north, 600,000 on the South Korea side, with no peace treaty, only a temporary armistice separating them.

It had been 47 years since I left Peking. As the communists advanced out of Manchuria, instead of leaving as the State Department advised, I accepted an invitation to teach at Yenching University, 12 miles outside the city walls, and barely beat the communists to the campus. The 8th Liberation Army, under its "Red Napoleon" captured it only about two weeks after I arrived, and the next year was neither as bad as I expected, nor as good as I had hoped. But that is another story.

The next time I saw Peking was on our way to North Korea in 1997. I remembered the bad days. And Tienan-men Square was still on our minds. After the years of freedom in South Korea and the USA landing in China felt like landing behind walls closing in on us again, and suspicions of constant surveillance and thought control. How circumstances do change our emotional responses. Landing in China after North Korea was like being free again. We felt liberated.

And the church. Compared with North Korea's pitifully small, government dominated three open churches, China, which is also

communist, now has one of the fastest growing number of Christians in the world. They told me when I was thrown out of China that after they got rid of us missionaries the Chinese church would wither away. Well, it didn't. It is the communists who are withering, and the Chinese churches which are growing. Back then, in 1951, there were 3 million Christians in China. Today after half a century of communism there are 30 million--ten times as many as before the revolution. And some say there are 60 million, 20 times as many. We attended just one church service in Peking. There were 1300 people trying to get into a sanctuary built for only 1000. And the 80 year old pastor stood up and said to them, "There are only 50,000 Christians in Peking, out of a population of 10 million. We have a holiday next week. Don't waste it. Go out and tell the people you meet about the Lord Jesus Christ." Pray for Peking. Don't forget my 3rd Jerusalem.

PRINCETON. And don't forget my fourth Jerusalem, Princeton, New Jersey. There are times that it won't seem like Jerusalem. Too much study, not enough time to sing the Lord's songs in this strange land. Too many books to read, no time to pray. Some may even tell you that there are too many Asiatics here, especially Koreans. But the Lord brought you here. If you don't believe that, you don't belong here. I put it off myself as long as possible. I wanted to stay in Korea. Then I had to retire, and in the middle of the night the Lord spoke to me--well, it wasn't exactly the Lord, it was Dr. McCord, the president of Princeton seminary then. But what he said was like a message from the Lord. He woke me up at 2:30 in the morning--he didn't know what time it was in Korea, and his gravelly voice over the

phone said, "Sam, you've been long enough in Korea. I have a mission field for you here right here in Princeton".

And that is true for you, too. If you feel that the Lord called you to three years here in Princeton, for those three years this will be your mission field. And if you really are a Christian, there is still work here for anyone not embarrassed to be a witnesses for the good news of Jesus Christ in this secularizing culture which desperately needs a fresh touch of the good news of the gospel.

Don't forget any of your own Jerusalems, and especially the one you're in.

"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I forget thee."

## REMEMBER JERUSALEM

Psalm 137:1,3-6; Rev. 21 1-4

Let me begin with a poem, one of the oldest poems in the world.

[By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down, and wept when we remembered Zion.... Our captors ...[said], 'Sing us a song of Zion'.] How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember thee, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy."

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem." It's a song of the refugees, a song of the marginalized, and it was written at least 2,500 years ago, Psalm 137. But what does Jerusalem have to do with Asia (or North Korea)? That's what I am supposed to be talking about. Aside from the fact that Jerusalem is in Asia (which some people forget), I think of the connection in another way. I think of the symbol, Jerusalem. However far any of us roam, however long we live, we all have our Jerusalems. Our Jerusalems are those almost sacred places in our memories, the roots of our identities. They are what we always remember as "home".

I have three Jerusalems (four), three (four) cities I will always remember. One is Pyengyang, the capital of North Korea. One is Seoul, the capital of South Korea. And one is Peking (or Princeton)). Those are my homes, my Jerusalems. I have lived in them longer or more intensely than anywhere else, about 18 years in Pyengyang, some 25 years in Seoul, and 2 intense years I will never forget in Peking in the middle of a revolution (and/or 20 in Princeton). My three Jerusalems. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my hand wither, and my tongue cleave to the roof

Folk religions 12,000,000      [Moon's Unif. Ch 500,000  
Confucianist 10,000,000      7th Day Adventist 140,000  
Salvation Army 100,000

But I want to tell you about the Bright Star church in Seoul which we visited about a year ago. It has, I believe, what surely must be the largest daily prayer meeting in the world. They pray at dawn. Two services. 5,000 at 4, and since the church is too small for more, another 5,000 at 5 a.m. They pray for the day when the two Koreas will be one again. They pray for North Korea. And when I asked the young pastor how in not much more than 20 years his church had grown to 30,000 members, he simply said, "We pray".

That's something we can all do. But sometimes I wonder if American Presbyterians have forgotten how to pray. We should remember that John Calvin said, "Prayer is the central act of the Christian life", and we lose that center at our peril. We can learn something from that Bright Star Presbyterian Church.

30,000 members, 2,000 deacons--and it isn't even the largest Presbyterian church in Seoul. Presbyterians started in Geneva....

Methodist started in England.....

Pentecostals started in Southern California...

And they are all praying churches. We can learn from the Koreans how to pray.  
*And give...*

III. The third church is the Chung-Moon-Wen church in Peking, China. I call it "the church with a world mission in a land where we thought " the church had been wiped out". Communist China.

Coming out of North Korea and landing in communist China was a strange experience. On our way to North Korea, Peking seemed rather drab, and lifeless. But going back out of North Korea, when we stepped out into the airport we actually experience a sense of liberation. Communist China is still communist, and still a dictatorship, but after North Korea it seemed alive, and active and liberated. The streets were crowded and humming with business. People stepped lively, and were smiling. No one was watching us, or following us.

And the church. What an uplifting experience that was. There were 1,300 people trying to get into the service. They could barely make room for us. And the sermon. No politics. It came straight from the Bible. The 82 year old read his text: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." Billy Graham could have been proud of it. 'Next week, you know," he said, "is one of our big

holidays. You won't be working, so get out and tell the good news about Jesus. There are only 50,000 Christians in this great city of 10 million people. They need to know about Jesus. And then, there is a whole world out there!" Imagine preaching in communist China to people so recently persecuted, with such boldness and honesty.